

SINGLE FAMILY DESIGN BOARD

PART 2

LANDSCAPE DESIGN



Prepared By

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

CALIFORNIA

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SINGLE FAMILY DESIGN BOARD GOALS

The SFDB is guided by a set of general goals that define the major concerns and objectives of its review process. These goals are:

- A. to protect the historic and architectural qualities of Santa Barbara;
- B. to protect the beauty and ecological balance of Santa Barbara's natural resources;
- C. to insure development and building consistent with the policies of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance;
- D. to promote high standards in architectural design and the construction of aesthetically pleasing structures;
- E. to improve the general quality of the environment and promote conservation of natural and manmade resources of the City;
- F. to encourage planning that is orderly, functionally efficient, healthful, convenient to the public, and aesthetically pleasing;
- G. to promote neighborhood compatibility;
- H. to encourage the preservation of pre -1925 and Hispanic styles of architecture;
- I. to promote visual relief throughout the community by preservation of public scenic ocean and mountain vistas, creation of open space, and variation of styles of architecture;
- J. to preserve creek areas through restoration, maintenance, and enhancement, and to discourage removal of significant trees and foliage removal; and
- K. to encourage landscape design that utilizes water-wise plants and the most efficient irrigation technology available for the protection and conservation of our water resources.

SFDB LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Guidelines. To provide general and specific guidelines for landscape plan design and installation throughout single-family neighborhoods in the City. Landscaping should be used as a unifying element within a project to enhance a building site and help achieve project compatibility with existing surroundings while complying with applicable policies and regulations.

- **Relationship to the General & Coastal Plans & Other Handouts.** The Santa Barbara General Plan contains policies and direction regarding landscaping in the Land Use, Conservation and Seismic Safety Elements. City scenic routes, tree preservation, creek protection and other topics are covered in the elements. The Coastal Plan also contains landscaping direction; especially regarding bluff-top development, views from Highway 101, and tree preservation and protection. General Plan and Coastal Plan policies and direction prevail over both the Zoning Ordinance and SFDB Guidelines.

Relationship to Zoning Ordinance. The Santa Barbara Municipal Code contains specific standards that must be met in landscape plans, including:

- planting material standards (28.87)
- tree maintenance (15.24)
- water conservation (22.08)
- vegetation removal (22.10)

Code requirements prevail over these guidelines. These guidelines are intended to augment the Municipal Code by providing further guidelines and details to complement topics in the Code, as well as to provide guidelines on additional topics.

Why SFDB Landscape Guidelines? Many projects subject to SFDB review are required to have landscape plans. Projects in some areas, such as the Hillside Design District or the downtown grid, are subject to Supplemental Design Guidelines (See, discussion in Part 1 of these SFDB Guidelines) which include direction regarding landscaping. However, many SFDB projects are not in an area with Supplemental Design Guidelines. These SFDB Landscape Guidelines clarify and expand on SFDB criteria for reviewing required landscape plans throughout the City.

Relationship to Supplemental Guidelines. In general, this document is compatible with the Supplemental Design Guidelines listed in the Introduction. However, where there are two guideline sets applicable to a project addressing the same issue, the Supplemental Design Guideline that applies to the specific area, special district, or specific topic would prevail over these SFDB guidelines.

Relationship to Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance (NPO). These SFDB Landscape Guidelines are intended to guide the SFDB regarding landscape issues when making NPO findings pursuant to Municipal Code § 22.69.050.

Relationship to Other City Handouts. The City provides full color handouts which provide specific techniques on how to comply with the Landscape Design Standards for Water Conservation and other sustainable landscaping techniques. Full-color handouts regarding sustainable and water-wise landscaping are available in the 630 Garden Street lobby area and on-line at:

www.santabarbaraca.gov/Government/Departments/PW/WCBrochuresAndMore.htm

- **Lawn Alternatives**, City of Santa Barbara Water Conservation Program
- **Sustainable Landscaping: Resource Efficient Landscapes for Santa Barbara County**, Santa Barbara County Water Agency and City of Santa Barbara Public Works Department
- **How to Be Water-Wise in Your Garden**, Family of Santa Barbara Water Providers
- **How to Water Your Garden**, Sunset, 2000.
- **Water-Wise Gardening for California: Advice and Design Ideas for the 21st Century**, the Editors of Sunset

Also see www.sbwater.org for additional water-saving information.

Guideline Organization. The SFDB landscaping guidelines are broken into four sections. The first section describes when Landscape Plans are required and licensing requirements. The second section consists of general landscape guidelines applicable to all projects. Vegetation removal guidelines and their relationship with NPO vegetation removal findings is described in the third section. The last section covers special constraint area guideline topics.

SECTION 1 Landscape and Irrigation Plan Applicability

1.1. Landscape Plans

A. Applicability.

1. **Single-Family Home Projects.** The SFDB requires a landscape plan for all new single-family residential units.
2. **Single-Family Home Property Projects with Terracing Components.** Landscape plans are required where terracing projects occur in the hillside area. The plans are required to ensure fire hazard landscaping issues are addressed and to stabilize and beautify graded areas.
3. **Major Addition or Alteration Projects.** Projects involving substantial additions or alterations to existing developed sites may require landscape plans when:
 - existing landscaped areas are proposed for removal or alteration and/or
 - new landscaping improvements are proposed.
4. **Projects with Grading Work or Vegetation Removal.** Projects which propose substantial landscaping changes as a result of grading work or vegetation removal may require landscape plans or additional landscaping information submittal at the SFDB's discretion.
5. **Projects Which Involve Historic, Archaeological, or Environmental Resource or Hazards and Projects with Potential Public View Impacts.** Landscape improvements and a landscape plan may be required to address aesthetic concerns in the following cases:
 - when a proposed improvement involves a historic, archaeological, or environmental resource or hazard, and/or
 - to lessen potential project impacts to public scenic views.
6. **Planning Commission Projects.** A Landscape Plan is required for projects

subject to Planning Commission review unless waived.

- B. **Exemptions.** Minor projects with landscaping that is not visible to the public may be exempt from the above requirements as determined by the SFDB. In these instances, proposed landscaping may be shown on the site plan rather than on a separate landscape plan.
- C. **Plan Contents.** Landscape plans must be submitted prior to the SFDB Preliminary Review hearing. Landscape plans shall indicate:
1. Location, size, species and common name of existing and proposed trees, shrubs, plants and turf.
 2. Any trees proposed for removal indicated with an "X."
 3. Total landscaped area in square feet.
 4. Total proposed water-wise and non-water-wise planting areas in square feet and as a percentage of total area landscaped with plants. "Water-wise" plants are required for 80% or more of residential project landscaped areas.
 5. Location of any proposed paved surfaces.
 6. Site and lot landscape and hardscape area percentages.
 7. Existing and proposed landscaping for street parkway strips fronting the subject property.
 8. Irrigation plans, except when the SFDB waives this requirement. An irrigation plan must include the City Water Conservation compliance statement at final approval. Refer to Landscape Design Standards for Water Conservation § 22.080.020 for further irrigation plan requirements.
 9. For projects in the High Fire Hazard Area, additional submittal requirements apply (see Appendix B); for example:
 - Indication of which existing and proposed vegetation is native and indication of existing native vegetation to be retained.
 - Include the method used to remove vegetation (e.g. mechanical or hand cutting).
 - Delineate landscape zones around structures following plant placement suggestions per Appendix B (0-30 ft., 30-50 ft., 50-70 ft. and 70-100 ft.)

Final Landscape Plans may also be required to include additional planting, specifications, and erosion control measures.

1.2 Licensing Requirement

- A. **General.** Unlicensed persons may prepare landscape plans for minor work involving single residential units, or projects consisting only of landscaping for 5,000 square feet or less. (Please refer to current State Landscape Architects Practice Act, Business and Professions Code § 5615 et seq.)

However, the SFDB may require a licensed landscape architect to prepare plans for these projects in the following circumstances:

1. The unlicensed person's landscape or irrigation plan submittals are determined inadequate or otherwise do not meet minimum review standards.
2. The proposed project involves extensive grading, revegetation or improvements with unique or sensitive habitats or environments.

SECTION 2 General Guidelines. Landscaping is considered an integral part of a project's design. Landscaping can enhance the City's natural beauty. Landscaping can complement new development as well as provide neighborhood cohesiveness. Landscaping embellishes and enhances new construction. Landscape plans should reflect consideration of overall site aesthetics. However, avoid using landscaping to correct problems of design, privacy or bulk. The architecture of a building should be of sufficient aesthetic quality to stand alone regardless of potential landscape changes over time. Landscaping improvements should:

- complement architecture;
- provide outdoor privacy areas;
- provide screening for undesirable views;
- provide usable and functional open space; and
- use appropriate water-wise plants, limited turf and efficient irrigation design principles.

The following general guidelines apply to all types of landscaping proposals:

- 2.1 **Site Layout and Massing** Landscape massing refers to plant material that creates an appearance of substantial vegetation. The landscape plan should balance plant material and hardscape site elements such as walkways and walls.
 - A. **Lot Landscape Coverage.** Landscape massing shall provide for a generous overall percentage of plant landscaping in relation to the site and lot hardscape. Paved areas should be minimized and planting areas maximized.
 - B. **Neighbor Screening.** Where appropriate, consider screening plants, such as hedges, to create privacy between neighbors. Special care to ensure mature hedge heights and sizes will fit the space is needed to ensure only a minimal amount of pruning is necessary for maintenance. Hedges shall comply with SBMC §28.87.170.
 - C. **Neighborhood Compatibility.** Landscaping visible from the street should be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in plant type and scale. Site elements such as walls, steps, fences, etc. should be compatible with neighborhood elements in scale, color and materials.
 - D. **Trees for Shade and Weather Protection.** Canopy, skyline, and specimen trees shall be provided for shade and weather protection.
- 2.2 **Plant Selection.** Plant selection for the landscape plan should consider principles of sustainable landscaping and be sensitive to the elements described below.

- A. **Blending with Existing Vegetation.** Blend the type, coloring, size, and height of proposed vegetation into existing vegetation.
- B. **Growth.** Consider appropriate plant selection and location to:
 - 1. Reduce the potential for normal plant material growth to significantly block an adjacent property's primary scenic view or sunlight (solar access), and/or
 - 2. Achieve privacy screening and produce a desired aesthetic result. Select plants that can grow to the necessary screening height without having to be pruned.
 - 3. Ensure vegetation scale consistent with public view preservation called for in the Coastal Plan and General Plan (e.g. Land Use Element City Scenic Routes).
- C. **Adaptability.** Emphasis shall be placed on the concept of "Right Plant/Right Place." Select plants that are naturally adapted to the growing conditions of the site: soil type, slope, climate tolerance, space limitations, etc.
- D. **Native and Mediterranean Plants.** Use native plants whenever possible. Where non-native species are used, emphasize plants from other Mediterranean climate regions.
- E. **Invasive Plants.** Avoid invasive plant use, especially in, or adjacent to, environmentally sensitive habitat areas. Carefully select plants to avoid species that might migrate from the landscape and become "weeds." (Refer to the attached List of Invasive Plants, Appendix C, published by the California Exotic Pest Plant Council.)
- F. **Fire Retardant Landscaping.** Use fire retardant landscaping where possible. See Section 4.3 High Fire Hazard Area Landscape Design and Appendix B for information about High Fire Hazard Area landscaping requirements. A list of plants which are highly flammable and should not be planted in the High Fire Hazard Area is included in Appendix B.
- G. **Plant Spacing and Height.** Space plants according to their mature size, allowing for plant maturation without crowding or root damage. Consider mature plant height to avoid unnecessary pruning and hedging, especially under windows and eaves of structures and along property lines.
- H. **Group by Plant Needs.** Plants with similar cultivation, watering and sun/shade requirements should be grouped together into hydrozones and designated to separate appropriate valve types, per SBMC §22.080.020.
- I. **Limit Turf.** Use turf only in areas where appropriate for recreational uses. Adhere to turf reduction percentage requirements in SBMC §22.080.020. Consider lawn alternative species.

2.3 Sustainability Principles Guidelines throughout this document support sustainable principles. Landscape and irrigation system design should reflect consideration of sustainable landscaping principles and be sensitive to elements described below. Also, see the additional sustainability concepts in Special Area Guidelines, Section 4.

- A. **Preserve Existing Vegetation.** Preserve existing vegetation and significant trees as much as possible (See Section 3, Tree and Vegetation Preservation).
- B. **Natural Features and Graded Areas.** Avoid unnecessary grading and removal of soil. Protect existing natural features and re-vegetate graded areas as soon as possible.
- C. **Climate Buffering.** Use landscaping to control sun and wind. For example, the use of deciduous trees and/or vines on the south sides of buildings can provide passive heat in the winter and cooling in the summer.
- D. **Erosion-Prone Areas.** Consistent with the Seismic Safety Element, species that add weight to a hillside (such as iceplant) shall be avoided on steep hillsides or adjacent to bluff top areas susceptible to erosion. Deep-rooted species that assist in stabilizing slopes and control erosion are encouraged.
- E. **Water Efficiency.** Water-efficient landscaping is mandatory per SBMC 22.080.020. Landscaping and irrigation shall be planned with consideration for water conservation through use of water-wise plant species, water-efficient irrigation systems and other methods listed in SBMC §22.080.020, including using drip irrigation and mulching and designing irrigation to minimize runoff.
- F. **Reducing Runoff.** Plant species that require significant watering (such as turf) shall be avoided on steep hillsides or narrow pathways, planters and parkways. Such areas are difficult to irrigate without significant runoff. Note the requirements in SBMC §22.080.020.
- G. **Irrigation.** Use water-efficient irrigation systems, including drip irrigation, micro sprayers, bubbler and rotating spray nozzles. Use smart irrigation controllers and rain sensors. Note the requirements in SBMC §22.080.020.
- H. **Waste Minimization.** Sustainable landscape planning that protects the environment by using minimal resources and creating minimal waste is encouraged.
- I. **Stormwater Management.** Santa Barbara neighborhoods most commonly drain to local creeks, which then flow to the ocean. Non-point source pollution such as pesticides and fertilizers from lawns, heavy metals from driveways and pet waste pose a significant threat to the quality of life on our beaches and streams. Stormwater should be viewed as a resource with environmental and educational significance that can give unique character to neighborhood landscapes. Bioswales, infiltration areas, vegetated filter strips, porous paving, rainwater cisterns, and rainwater gardens should be incorporated into site design to allow biofiltration of sediment and pollutants, to slow down potentially damaging flows, and to increase the presence of nature within the community. These measures are very attractive, low tech, low cost, low maintenance and provide significant benefits to our environment. Appropriate choice of plantings and irrigation for the site helps reduce urban runoff and the subsequent non-point source pollution.

- J. **On-Site Water Retention and Natural Drainage.** Use methods to retain water on the site to recharge groundwater and to use for future watering (e.g. cisterns). Design landscaping to enhance natural drainage and biofiltration of pollutants through the use of bioswales, detention basins and other techniques.
- K. **Permeability and Percolation.** Use urban runoff/pollution control Best Management Practices to maximize the permeability of sites and on-site percolation of runoff. For example, design projects to minimize paved areas, collect runoff on-site, or maximize hardscape area permeability with brick or pavers on sand.
- L. **Drainage Flow.** Use natural watercourses, earth swales, v-ditches, drywells and water dissipation devices to enhance drainage flow on and through the site.

2.4 **Street and Driveway Design** Street and driveway designs should utilize the following design concepts.

- A. **Grading, Exposed Excavations and Retaining Walls.** Design streets or driveways to limit grading quantities and steep, exposed excavations and avoid the use of retaining walls where possible.
- B. **Street and Driveway Widths.** Limit street and driveway widths to reduce paving quantity and encourage slower vehicle speeds, while providing adequate access. Consider the use of ribbon driveways, pavers and other materials that decrease the amount of pavement and increase permeability. Please note, applicants must consult with the Fire Department and Transportation Division regarding alternative paving methods.
- C. **Garage Orientation.** Where possible, orient driveways and garages to be street-friendly, so that garage or carport openings are not facing directly onto streets.
- D. **Sidewalk Widths.** Provide street sidewalk widths that allow for landscaped parkways to buffer pedestrians from street traffic.
- E. **Street Trees.** City street trees should be incorporated into a project when none exist and/or at locations recommended by the SFDB or City Arborist and the Street Tree Master Plan. Any street tree removal is subject to Park Commission approval.
- F. **Plants and Irrigation in Parkway.** Water-wise plants are required and turf is prohibited in parkways. Drip irrigation or low precipitation rate sprinklers/bubblers are encouraged and irrigation must be designed to minimize runoff. See the City's list of recommended plants for parkways.

SECTION 3 Tree and Vegetation Preservation

- 3.1 **General** Development should be sensitive to existing mature trees as they are a valued community resource. The SFDB's goal is to prevent unnecessary tree removal. Mature trees should be integrated into project design rather than removed. All feasible options should be exhausted prior to tree removal.

- A. **Goal.** Existing tree preservation and protection shall be a primary goal of a landscape design.
- B. **Projects Proposing Tree Removal.** If existing tree preservation is not possible, tree loss may result in required tree replacement(s) or possible project denial.
- C. **General Tree Replacement Standards.** Trees four (4) inches in diameter or greater at four (4) feet above grade in height removed shall be replaced on site on a minimum one-to-one basis, unless an alternative replacement ratio is deemed necessary as part of the environmental review process. The standard required mitigation for tree loss is a 3:1 ratio replacement. This standard can also be increased up to 10:1 depending on the type of tree removed, lot size, and size and expected survival rate of replacement trees.

The appropriate replacement size shall be determined through the environmental review process in conjunction with SFDB review depending on the size and biological value of the tree and on-site conditions. (See Native and Specimen Tree Protection and Replacement Standards, below).

- D. **Native and Specimen Tree Protection and Replacement Standards.**
Consistent with Conservation Element Visual Resources Policy 4.0 and Biological Resource Policy 4.0, efforts shall be made to preserve trees. In particular, native trees, including oak trees, and specimen trees are subject to the following guidelines:
 - 1. **Earth Disturbance Prohibitions.** No earth disturbance is allowed in the circular area one-third the distance of the overall canopy/dripline as measured from the trunk. (For example, if the tree canopy is 30 feet, no work can be done in the first 10 feet from the outside edge of the trunk in all directions.) In other areas under the canopy/dripline, earth may only be disturbed with hand tools.
 - 2. **Arborist's Report.** Any work within the general vicinity of the dripline of a native or specimen tree may require an Arborist's Report. If an Arborist's Report is required, the SFDB may defer to the report's recommendations.
 - 3. **Paving.** Paving and other non-permeable surface encroachment under native and specimen tree canopy/driplines should be minimized. For oak trees, no paving is allowed under the canopy due to their sensitivity to paving. If paving or other non-permeable surfaces encroach within a canopy, no more than 25% of the total area beneath the canopy dripline can be covered and paving may only be placed by hand or with hand tools.
 - 4. **Distance from Structures.** The edge of the mature native or specimen tree canopy dripline should remain a minimum of five (5) feet from all new structures.
 - 5. **Protection Notes.** Proposed projects which may impact existing native or specimen trees are required to submit Tree Protection notes as part of the final landscape submittal. Notes shall be located on all site and/or grading plans.
 - 6. **Replacement Dimensions.** If it is determined that a native or specimen tree is to be removed, the diameter of the required replacement tree(s) will

be equal to or greater than one-quarter the diameter of the existing tree (e.g., a 12-inch-diameter oak will be replaced with one measuring no less than 3 inches). Smaller tree replacement sizes than this formula may be specified in some cases to ensure replacement tree availability.

- 3.2 **Vegetation Removal and Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance (NPO)** There are specific vegetation removal types and quantities that may require a vegetation removal permit and SFDB review. For example, the Fire Department requires weed abatement in specific areas of the City; a vegetation removal permit may be required for some forms of weed abatement. Please refer to SBMC Chapter 22.10 for exemption categories.

NPO findings are made for appropriate grading and for native tree protection on hillsides. The SFDB strongly encourages native vegetation preservation. SFDB NPO findings must be made for project approval.

- 3.3 **Landscape Maintenance/Conditions of Approval** The SFDB may conditionally approve projects to maintain landscaping to allow natural tree growth to mature heights. It is unlawful to cut down or otherwise destroy trees as outlined in Chapter SBMC §15.24. Tree removal and excessive pruning of trees is considered destruction and shall be considered a violation of SFDB conditions of approval for required landscaping.

SECTION 4 Special Areas

- 4.1 **Hillside Residential Landscape Design.** Landscaping in hillside areas should be sensitive to the community's view of the new development, as well as the view from the subject property. Plantings should soften the appearance of new home, major addition, and retaining wall project components. The following guidelines are specific to hillside areas of the City.
- A. **Appearance.** Landscaping should visually diminish the mass of structures as viewed from the community. Plantings should be selected from a palette of California native plants or Mediterranean plants that blend into the hillside and frame views. Plantings should not distract from the natural hillside profile. For example, palm tree installation would be discouraged, especially along ridgelines. Also, brightly colored flowers such as begonias planted to cover large areas of publicly visible fences and walls would be discouraged because they contrast with the surrounding hillside when viewed from a distance.
 - B. **Natural Surroundings.** Oak woodlands, steep slopes, bluffs, creeks, watersheds, or other native habitats should be evaluated by a biologist, arborist, or landscape architect to determine the appropriate landscape plant selection and maintenance to minimize negative effects on natural areas.
 - C. **Grading.** Grading should be minimized.
 - D. **Slope Failure.** In the event of slope failure, a soils engineer, geologist or landscape architect may be required to recommend appropriate mitigation for plantings and/or irrigation installation as well as erosion control measures.
 - E. **Erosion Control Measures.** Erosion control measures should also be included on hillside landscape plans. Also, refer to the Seismic Safety Element Landslides Hazard Reduction recommendations section.

4.2 Creeks, Water Courses and Wetlands Projects near creeks, water courses and wetlands are subject to the following guidelines. These projects should also be designed with special consideration for consistency with Sustainability Guidelines 2.3.

- A. **Degradation Prohibition.** Development in and adjacent to creeks shall not degrade the creeks or their riparian environments. Where existing creeks, watercourses, and/or wetlands provide a natural environment, avoid removal of these environments.
- B. **Native Plant Species.** Protect, maintain, enhance, and/or restore native plant species and vegetation in areas along natural creeks, watercourses and wetlands.
- C. **Expert Use.** Consult a licensed landscape architect and/or biologist to provide recommendations and/or specifications to plant, protect or revegetate a site. In many cases, a biologist will be required to participate in the development of restoration and/or revegetation plans.
- D. **Immediately Adjacent Landscaping.** Only native, non-invasive vegetation shall be planted immediately adjacent to creeks, watercourses and wetlands. Also, see Conservation Element and Local Coastal Plan direction regarding development on bluffs.
- E. **Buffer Landscaping.** Vegetative buffers shall be provided between natural areas and developed or high-use areas. Buffer vegetation should be native, but may include non-native vegetation if it is non-invasive.

4.3 High Fire Hazard Area Landscape Design

- A. **Vegetation Modification Zone.** Provide or create a vegetation modification zone around structures consistent with Fire Department High Fire Hazard Area Landscape Guidelines. The guidelines specify drought-tolerant and fire-resistant plants to reduce wildfire risks. Please consult with the Fire Department's Wildland Interface Specialist.
- B. **Native and Fire Retardant Vegetation.** Native and fire retardant vegetation use is encouraged for major cut and fill slope landscaping where development occurs on hillsides.